

NEWSPAPER

Second Half Spring Term 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

As we approach the end of the second half of the Spring Term I would once again like to say a huge thank you to everyone for your generous support and kind words. Your support and encouragement is much appreciated and we are certainly making good progress in making the necessary improvements to St Chad's week by week. This newsletter will bring you fully up to date with everything that is happening in school this half term.

Our values this half term are faith filled and hopeful – we are helping the children to understand these values in an age appropriate way:



FAITH FILLED: Proud of our firm trust and love for Jesus and full of faith that he loves each one of us. We share our faith with others freely and we try to be as much like Jesus as we can be.



HOPEFUL: We are full of hope because Jesus loves us and we trust him. We know we can make a difference in the world by following Jesus' teachings and we know that our prayers are heard. We have confidence during difficult times because we are full of the hope and promise that Jesus gives us.



Coronavirus

Staff and children must not come to school if they have symptoms of Covid-19: a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature (feeling hot to touch on the chest or back) and anyone with the symptoms must self-isolate according to the latest guidance – currently 14 days.

If you do not feel you can cope with your/your child's symptoms at home, or if their condition gets worse, or if the symptoms do not get better after 7 days – use the 111 Coronavirus available at www.111.nhs.uk If you can't get help online, then call 111.

We are actively encouraging regular hand washing and allowing plenty of time for the children to do this

School Closures

At the moment schools are open as normal and staff and children are expected to attend if they are fit to do so and are not required to self-isolate. This situation could change and we will be guided by government instructions. There may be other reasons why schools might need to close – for example if we do not have enough staff at school to keep the children safe. It's really important we have your up to date contact details in case this happens – please make sure the school office has up to date contact numbers for at least two family members at least one of which must be the person with parental responsibility or registered carer.

Attendance during the virus outbreak

Schools in this country are open as normal and children are expected to attend. If your child is self-isolating for 14 days a special code can be given on the register as they are not ill but are following government guidance. Unfortunately if you choose to keep your child at home for personal reasons and they are not ill or self-isolating, this will be recorded as an absence. However, these are unprecedented circumstances and as parents we wholly respect your right to make decisions about your child's health and safety.

Providing work for children

If we are forced to close by the government or circumstances beyond our control (e.g. a staffing shortage that puts children's safety at risk) we will provide packs of work for the children to complete. We are getting these ready now so that they are available to send out if a closure is announced. St Chad's does not currently have an online learning platform (this is another target for the future) so we will provide paper based resources. We would also like to signpost you to a number of useful websites that the children can use to access online learning resources:



Khan Academy

<https://www.khanacademy.org>

Especially good for maths and computing for all ages but other subjects at Secondary level. Note this uses the U.S. grade system but it's mostly common material.

BBC Learning

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/coursesearch/>

This site is old and no longer updated and yet there's so much still available, from language learning to BBC Bitesize for revision. No TV licence required except for content on BBC iPlayer.

Blockly

<https://blockly.games>

Learn computer programming skills - fun and free.

Scratch

<https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/games/>

Creative computer programming

Ted Ed

<https://ed.ted.com>

All sorts of engaging educational videos

National Geographic Kids

<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/>

Activities and quizzes for younger kids.

Mystery Science

<https://mysteryscience.com>

Free science lessons

Crest Awards

<https://www.crestawards.org>

Science awards you can complete from home.



iDEA Awards

<https://idea.org.uk>

Digital enterprise award scheme you can complete online.

Oxford Owl for Home

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/>

Lots of free resources for Primary age

Big History Project

<https://www.bighistoryproject.com/home>

Aimed at Secondary age. Multi disciplinary activities.

Geography Games

<https://world-geography-games.com/world.html>

Geography gaming!

Blue Peter Badges

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/joinin/about-blue-peter-badges>

If you have a stamp and a nearby post box.

DK Find Out

[https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/?](https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/?fbclid=IwAR2wJdpSJSelTf4do6aPhff8A3tAktmnpaxqZbkgudD49l71ep8-sjXmrac)

fbclid=IwAR2wJdpSJSelTf4do6aPhff8A3tAktmnpaxqZbkgudD49l71ep8-sjXmrac

Activities and quizzes

Twinkl

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk>

This is more for printouts, and usually at a fee, but they are offering a month of free access to parents in the event of school closures.

School assemblies and special events – temporarily closed to parents and visitors

You will see in the separate letter being sent out that our multi academy company has introduced some measures across the three schools to seek to minimise the spread of the virus whilst our schools remain open. This is in order to seek to comply with the government advice to limit social contact and to protect both visitors and members of the school community.

We are very sad to let you know that from today, Tuesday 17th March, in order to reduce footfall in our schools, **for a temporary period we will not be admitting parents and visitors to our weekly merit assembly, additional assemblies such as those organised for Mother's Day in Reception Class will not go ahead and the special assembly concerts organised for the week before the Easter holidays will be cancelled.**

We need to ask our team of parent volunteers to stop volunteering for this temporary period as we limit the footfall in the school. We are really sad about this but the academy has taken these precautionary measures to seek to protect everyone – visitors and members of the school community alike.

Trips and visits are cancelled for the rest of this term and we will need to assess the situation after Easter with regard to the summer term.

Swimming for Year 3 has been cancelled for the remainder of the term on the basis that the academy has cancelled all trips out into the wider community as a precaution. You will receive a refund for any overpayments made.

Assemblies in school for the children will go ahead for the time being until there is further advice. This will be kept under close review by both the school and the wider academy.

We know how much you enjoy attending the weekly merit assemblies and we are sorry that we need to ask you not to attend at this time. We hope you understand the decision of the MAC to limit the footfall in the school and put in place actions to protect all school users – especially grandparents who may belong to a vulnerable group and pregnant women.

DPA Guitar Lessons

We have been informed by Dudley Performing Arts that their staff will not be coming into St Chad's for the remainder of the term. Private lessons in school have also been cancelled until further notice.

Second Hand Uniform Sale

The selling of second hand uniform in school has been postponed until further notice. Apologies.



Ofsted Inspection

St Chad's received a Section 8 (Short) inspection on Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th March last week. The Ofsted inspector was Mrs Pamela Matty. The outcome of the inspection cannot be shared until such time that the report letter is received and put on the Ofsted website. We will contact you and send you a copy of this as soon as it is published.

Whilst we cannot share the outcome until then, we can let you know some key points about the school.

The first thing that we all understand is that St Chad's is at the very beginning of a new journey of school improvement under the leadership of a new Executive Headteacher. There are many, many new improvements to the provision at the school – however it must be remembered that the new Executive Head has only been in post for a small number of weeks. Whilst a lot of new initiatives and improvements have been put in place – everything is very recent and has not yet had time to become established.

Significant positives are abundant at St Chad's including the behaviour and attitude of the children and the accuracy of the Executive Headteacher's evaluation of the school upon his arrival and subsequent actions. The commitment and dedication of the staff towards the children is a significant strength and bodes well for the ongoing improvement of the school. At the same time it must be pointed out that results at St Chad's are not yet as good as they should be in some areas. **This needs urgent improvement and new measures had already been put in place by Mr Hinton and the staff before the time of the inspection.** Given his short time at the school, however, these are new initiatives that still need time to take effect.

In a nutshell, the school has received very positive feedback for the improvements and changes that have been made **very recently**. The school is at the start of a new journey of improvement. Much has been done already and the new leadership, supported by a dedicated staff team, is recognised as being strong and effective. At the same time, everything is indeed very recent and as such has not had long enough to become embedded. A period of time is needed where the school needs to continue to improve and thrive and this cannot happen overnight even though a very good start has been made.

A message from Mr Hinton

We were expecting Ofsted as it is nearly four years since the school was last inspected. It is a shame that the inspection was due so soon after I took over as with the best will in the world, new initiatives take time to embed. You can be assured that the school improvement plan prioritises the most important targets for the school for the two terms since my appointment and we are working through the plan at a pace. There is some way to go until St Chad's is where we would really like it to be but you can be confident that an excellent start has been made and we will work very hard to make sure St Chad's is the best Catholic school it possibly can be.

What are the key targets we are working on at St Chad's?



We have recently invested over £8,500 in new home reading books and guided reading books for the children, replacing old stock. We can now ensure children bring home good quality books that are matched to their phonics and reading ability.



We have invested in staff training for the teaching of early reading and phonics and we have reorganised our phonics provision to give it greater prominence.



We have increased the provision on the timetable for guided reading and provided training for all staff in the teaching of guided reading.



We have introduced a new teaching and learning policy that makes connections between the Catholic Schools Pupil Profile and skills needed to be an effective learner. The early results of this are very positive indeed.



We will soon be launching (this week) our new behaviour policy with clear rewards and consequences together with updated marking and presentation policies. All of these new policies come with 'child friendly' versions that we will display in the classrooms so that children understand exactly what is expected from them.



We have just launched a new English curriculum that is better rooted in text types and offers children a more 'text based' theme to the units of work. This ensures we can cover the full national curriculum including spelling, grammar and punctuation.



We have also launched an interesting and exciting new curriculum for History, Geography, Art, Design Technology, Science, Computing, Music and P.E. We will evaluate our provision for Modern Foreign Languages in Key Stage 2 before the autumn, too. Again, early indications about the quality of work the children are producing are very encouraging. We sent out to parents a copy of the curriculum plans for this half term and we will do the same again after Easter as we know



Communication – keeping in touch with you

At the moment the school does not have the facility to send direct messages to parents and this is a situation we are working to resolve. The Schools buddy service works for some parents and doesn't work for others. To ensure we are communicating as effectively as possible, all letters are currently being sent out as paper copies and via Schools buddy as well. The exception to this is the weekly newsletter which is put on the website and sent out via Schools buddy. Until such time that we are able to introduce a new communication platform we will send paper copies as well as Schools buddy communications. Please be assured we are working to find a more reliable solution and will let you know when we are able to do this.

There have also been issues about mixed messages – for example Schools buddy saying one thing and the paper letter saying something else. We apologise for this and have put clearer systems in place to avoid this human error happening again (it happened with the finish times of after school clubs).





After School Activity Clubs

We are trialling a new way of providing after school clubs this half term and we have seen an increase in the uptake of clubs as a result. Previously, the school was relying on external, private companies to provide many after school clubs. These providers were sometimes unreliable – and children were disappointed by the clubs. This term all of the after school activity clubs have been staffed by our own staff. We have ensured that there are two of our own staff running each club. All staff are qualified Paediatric First Aiders and the cost of the clubs has been significantly reduced to a much more affordable £2.00 per session payable as a block booking for the half term.

We will continue to try this ‘in house’ way of providing clubs next term and will be in touch with the range of clubs we will be providing after Easter. We have had to make necessary financial decisions about the viability of clubs and as such need a minimum of 20 children to sign up to and pay for each club in order to break even. Unfortunately if there are less than 20 children in a club it is not ordinarily viable to run.

Look out for details of after school clubs after Easter.



Parent's Survey – based on 74 responses

Thank you very much to everyone (and there were lots of you) that responded to our own parent's survey and also to everyone (again there were lots of you!) who responded to Ofsted's Parentview survey during the inspection. We really appreciate your time. Both surveys provided consistent results

Key Strengths

The vast majority of parents feel their child is happy at St Chad's (97%)
99% of parents feel their child is safe at St Chad's
95% of parents think St Chad's makes sure the children behave well
95% of parents think their child does well at St Chad's
95% of parents feel there is a good range of subjects available to the children
96% of parents would recommend St Chad's to another parent

Key Areas for improvement

14% of parents did not feel that the school had dealt with bullying effectively – though they reported that support from the school has improved since January.
10% of parents did not feel school made them aware of what their child will be learning during the year – though again some parents recognised that this has recently changed.
12% of parents did not feel that the school deals with concerns properly when they are raised – recent improvements were however noted amongst most of the parents who had experienced issues.
14% of parents did not feel their child has the opportunity to take part in clubs and activities
14% of parents did not feel that the school supports their wider personal development

What the school is doing in response to your valuable feedback

Since January a new relationship with parents has been established and it is very important that all parents know that if they have any worries or concerns about their child they must contact the school leaders – Mr Hinton or Mrs Clews – who will do everything possible to help sort out the situation immediately.

A clear anti-bullying programme and a new child friendly policy will be launched in the coming weeks to further embed an anti-bullying culture amongst the pupils.

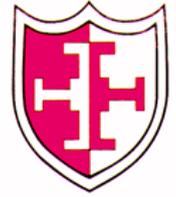
Mr Hinton has ultimate leadership responsibility for the school, so if your concern has not been previously addressed you should contact him directly.

We have started to send out termly information about what the children are learning – this will be continuing from now on. This is part of the new curriculum we have recently implemented.

School is committed to sorting out problems effectively and working in genuine partnership with parents. Many parents made reference to past dealings with the school in the survey – but some parents felt that even now some staff are not treating them in as respectful and helpful way as they should. It's really important that you let school leaders know straight away if you are not happy with the care and service you receive – we promise we will address your concerns and deal with your complaint immediately.

We are actively trialling new clubs and have brought the provision 'in house' resulting in much greater uptake. We will continue developing the clubs offering within the limits of what we can afford to provide. This will include finding out from children about the clubs they would like to attend.

Children's wider personal development – learning about fundamental British values, the cultures of the United Kingdom and learning about other faiths, together with covering cultural capital within the curriculum are all initiatives that we will be developing in the coming weeks and months.



Keep in touch – your child’s happiness, safety and academic progress are our highest priority

If you or your child are not happy for any reason, no matter how small – it’s very important that you let us know. We can resolve most issues quickly but we can only do this if you let us know straight away. Please do not hesitate to let us know.

You can see members of staff on the door each morning or you can call in to see Mr Hinton or Mrs Clews. We can also speak to you on the phone. If we can’t see you immediately for any reason we will always call you back the moment we are free.

Mr Hinton has ultimate leadership responsibility for the school and if for any reason you are unhappy with the way your concern has been dealt with, you must always contact him for help.

THANK YOU

Thank you for your support

Firstly, a personal thank you to everyone for the support and confidence you have placed in me. I am committed to making St Chad’s the best possible Catholic school it can be. I really appreciated the fact that so many of you shared your positive feelings about the changes being made with Ofsted last week whether that was online or face to face with the lead inspector.

It’s also been my great pleasure to meet lots of parents who have come to see me to provide my help where they have concerns. This is my responsibility and the reason why I am here – it is a great pleasure to sort out and resolve concerns and make sure you and your children are happy. Never hesitate to come and see me or give me a call – the school is here to serve and this is very important.

Finally, I thank you in anticipation of your support during potentially challenging times ahead with the Coronavirus outbreak. Everyone in school sends their best wishes to you and your family and we all hope that the situation passes quickly with as little impact as possible.

With every kind wish,

Mr M Hinton
Executive Principal